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## Poetry.

### THE PAST—THE PRESENT—AND THE FUTURE.

BY THE REV. J. M'JILTON, D. D.

Time is a sea and life glides o'er it,  
Heedless of the surges past;  
Still rolling on to those before it,  
Till it leaves them all at last.  
It minds not, though the billow sweeping,  
Swells on high its foamy crest;  
Or if the lightest wave comes creeping,  
Softly o'er the ocean's breast.

The restless waters ever forcing,  
Toss on high the sparkling spray;  
O'er the smooth sea's bosom coursing,  
Onward, onward, hold their way.  
Behind is one vast waste of ocean,  
Unexplored is all before;  
And the waves with ceaseless motion,  
Seek some dark and distant shore.

Life through change and chance forever,  
Rises with the tide and falls;  
In calm and tempest resting never,  
Hast'ning to eternal halls.  
Like the rill from pebbles gushing,  
Slowly it begins to stray,  
E'en the mighty torrent rushing,  
Dancing to the sea away.

Fancy with pleasant prattle,  
Dancing in its mother's arms;  
Flings aside its bells and rattle,  
Seeks its joy in other charms.  
A thousand things for its amusing,  
Strew the nursery's painted floor;  
The reckless child the whole refusing,  
Turas and cries, and calls for more.

Childhood passes,—youth succeeding,  
Hills of future bliss to climb;  
E'en only thing his course impeding,  
'Tis the tardiness of time.  
The hours of youth are light and pleasant,  
While he spies his after years;  
But chain'd a moment to the present,  
Heart and eyes are fill'd with tears.

When manhood comes,—he stops to wonder,  
Dark the future grows, and dim;  
He turns upon the past to ponder,  
Golder is the world to him.  
Where's the light of joyous childhood?  
Where's its gay and gilded flame?  
The sun that rose upon youth's wildwood,  
Pointing to his future fame?

Alas the future! childhood's heaven,  
Shining through youth's chainless scope,  
E'en come—is past—his thoughts are driven  
Back upon his boyhood's hope.  
From cold realities then shrinking,  
Future seems a dreary waste;  
He turns and in his heaven is thinking  
O'er again, the heedless past.

Thus like the wave is life careering,  
Over time's resistless sea;  
In storm and calm alike 'tis wearing  
Onward to eternity.  
Life's billows soon may cease their sweeping,  
Storm and tempest soon be o'er,  
And with the wave may life be sleeping  
Safe on the eternal shore.

## Christian Miscellany.

"We need a better acquaintance with the thought and reasonings of pure and lofty minds.—Dr. SARGENT."

### Close of the Year.—Looking Back.

During this year, on a dark, stormy night, a gallant ship was nearing our coast. Nobly she bore up under the storm, and hardly yielded to the fierceness of the gale till the cry of "breakers ahead," was shouted from the man looking out on the fore-castle. It came like a death-knell, and in a moment rang through the ship, and roused every sleeper. The suspense was not long. Hardy had the trembling souls gathered on the deck, ere a mighty wave lifted up the ship; for a moment she hung on the "broken wave," and in the next moment she was dashed on the rock. The very richness of her cargo made her strike the harder, and the blow shivered her into fragments. The cry of distress was heard on the shore, and the wailings of death rose sharp and clear above the roaring of the waves. But there was no help, and when the morning opened, the wreck, in fragments, was floating ashore,

and the bodies of the dead lay rolling in the waves, as they came in and retired. Only two men were saved. The owners lost their cargo, and many widows and orphans were left to poverty and mourning. But it was afterwards discovered, that for some time the captain had not examined his chart, nor had he sounded with the lead. It was all the result of his negligence.

Reader! Did he do right? When you think of the property lost, the lives cut off, the wives and children, and parents who were brought to sorrow, say, Did he do right? You answer, No! no! he was criminally negligent. He was so. But suppose you had been cut off from life during this year, would you not have made a more dreadful shipwreck, and lost what no ship's cargo could buy, and produced wailings unutterable in eternity? Or, have you daily examined your chart, and measured the waters, and kept your loins girded and your lamps trimmed? Look back upon the year now nearly gone by.

During this year, a father was seen at the head of a large family. He loved them tenderly; he toiled for them unceasingly; he watched them anxiously. Two of his little ones were already in the grave. At the beginning of the year, he resolved that before the year closed, he would begin family prayer, and daily commend the interests of those immortal souls committed to him, to God. He even looked forward to a favourable week in which to commence. But the week went by, and he did not do his duty. He was looking forward to another convenient season; but before that season came, a messenger was sent to him. At the command of God it came, and at once did its errand. Without an hour's warning, he was a dead man. The widow and the orphans gathered around the corpse, but they had never heard him pray! He left them, and passed into eternity, and they had never heard him offer one prayer for them!

Reader! Did this man do right? When he meets that family at the judgment-seat of God, will it appear that he did right? Have you friends, near and dear, for whom you have not daily prayed this year? If so, is this right? Do conscience and God say you have done right? Look back, and see.

During this year, a man was held up in life, preserved from sickness, fed, clothed, sheltered and surrounded with mercies by God. The man was busy and active all the year; but he did nothing for the glory of his Maker. He spoke many words, some brilliant, some witty, some severe, and some cruel, (all of them now living in God's memory)—but he said nothing for the glory of God and the salvation of men. Oh! if what he said and all he said, during this short year were engraven on a rock to stand for ever, to be read by every passer by, what a record would that be! What a responsibility is attached to our words! Mornings and evenings have opened and closed in mercy; sabbaths have come with their sweet and solemn calls, but during all the year, this man has lived without God, has not thanked him for his mercies, has not obeyed his voice, has not tried to live for eternity. The year is thrown away. Whatever he may do hereafter, to all eternity he will feel, that this year has been thrown away. Is this right? Has this man done right?

Reader! Is this man yourself? What a fearful account have you to give for your time, your actions, your influence, your words, your thoughts, for the year now nearly gone! Look back and see!

### Impressive Facts.

There is nothing in history that is so improving to the reader as those accounts which we meet with of the deaths of eminent persons, and of their behaviour in that solemn season. A few examples are subjoined.

Philip the Third, King of Spain, seriously reflecting upon the life which he had led, cried out, when laid upon his death-bed, "Ah, how happy should I have been, had I spent

in retirement those twenty-three years during which I have held my kingdom! My concern is not for my body, but for my soul."

Cardinal Wolsey, one of the greatest ministers of state, poured forth his soul in these sad words:—"Had I been as diligent in serving my God, as I have been to please my King, he would not have forsaken me now in my grey hairs."

Cardinal Richelieu, after he had given law to Europe for many years, confessed to M. Du Molin, that, having been forced upon many irregularities in his life-time, by what are called "reasons of state," he could not tell how to satisfy his conscience upon several accounts; and being asked one day by a friend, why he was so sad, he answered, "The soul is a serious thing. It must be sad here for a moment, or be sad for ever."

Cardinal Mazarine, having made religion wholly subservient to worldly interest, discarding one day with a Doctor of the Sorbonne, concerning the immortality of the soul, and a future state, said, weeping, "O my poor soul, whither wilt thou go?"—Afterwards, seeing the Queen-mother, he said to her, "Madam, your favours undid me; and were I to live my time again, I would be a Capuchin Friar, rather than a courtier."

Sir John Mason, Privy-Councillor to King Henry the Eighth, upon his death-bed addressed himself to the people around him to the following effect:—"I have seen the most remarkable things in foreign parts, and been present at most state transactions for thirty years together; and I have learned this after so many years' experience, that seriousness is the greatest wisdom; temperance, the best physic; and a good conscience, the best estate; and were I to live again, I would change the court for a cloister; my Privy-Councillor's bustles for a hermit's retirement; and the whole life I lived in the palace, for one hour's enjoyment of God in the chapel. All things forsake me but my God, my duty, and my prayer."

Sir Thomas Smith, Secretary of State to Queen Elizabeth, a few months before he died, sent for his friends, the Bishops of Winchester and Worcester, entreating them to draw for him, out of the word of God, the plainest and exactest way of making his peace with Him; adding, "It is a great pity that men know not to what end they are born into this world, till they are ready to go out of it."

Sir Philip Sydney left this as his last farewell to his friends: "Govern your will and affections by the will and word of your Creator. In me behold the end of the world and all its vanities."

Dr. Donne, a man of great parts and learning, being upon his death-bed, and taking a solemn leave of his friends, said, "I repent of all my life, but that part of which I spent in communion with God, and in doing good."

Only a year before his death, to a person who asked, "What is the shortest way to obtain a true knowledge of the Christian religion, in the full and just extent of it?"—John Locke returned the following significant answer:—"Study the holy Scripture, especially the New Testament. Therein are contained the words of eternal life. It has God for its author; salvation for its end; and truth, without any mixture of error, for its matter."

"At my death," says Sir Thomas Browne, "I mean to take a total adieu of the world, not caring for a monument, history, or epitaph: not so much as the memory of my name to be found anywhere, but in the universal register of God."

"When I look upon the tombs of the great," says Addison, "every emotion of envy dies in me. When I read the epitaphs of the beautiful, every inordinate desire goes out. When I meet with the grief of parents upon a tomb-stone, my heart melts with compassion. When I see the tomb of the parents themselves, I consider the vanity of grieving for those whom we must quickly follow. When I see Kings lying by those

who deposed them; when I see rival monarchs placed side by side; or the holy men that divided the world with their contests and disputes; I reflect with sorrow and astonishment on the little competitions, factions, and debates of mankind. When I read the several dates of the tombs, of some that died as yesterday, and some of six hundred years ago, I consider that great day, when we shall all of us be contemporaries, and make our appearance together."

### The Godly in Eternity.

So much as moments are exceeded by eternity, and the sighing of a man by the joys of an angel, and a salutary frown by the light of God's countenance, a few frowns by the infinite and eternal hallelujahs, so much are the sorrows of the Godly to be undervalued in respect of what is deposited for them in the treasures of eternity. These sorrows can die; but so cannot their joys. And if the blessed martyrs and confessors were asked concerning their past sufferings and their present rest, and the joys of their certain expectation, you should hear them glory in nothing but in the mercies of God and in the cross of the Lord Jesus. Every chain is a ray of light, and every prison is a palace, and every loss is the purchase of a kingdom, and every affront in the cause of God is an eternal honour, and every day of sorrow is a thousand years of comfort, multiplied with a never-ceasing numeration:—days without night, joys without sorrow, sanctity without sin, charity without stain, possession without fear, society without envyings, communication of joys without lessening; and they shall dwell in a blessed country, where an enemy never entered, and from whence a friend never went away.—  
Jeremy Taylor.

### Begin-to-day.

Lord, I do discover a fallacy, whereby I have long deceived myself; which is this: I have desired to begin my amendment from my birthday, or from some eminent festival, that so my repentance might bear some remarkable date. But when those days were come, I have adjourned my amendment to some other time. Thus, whilst I could not agree with myself when to start, I have almost lost the running of the race. I am resolved thus to befool myself no longer. I see no day but to-day: the instant time is always the fittest time. In Nebuchadnezzar's image, the lower the members, the coarser the metal. The farther off the time, the more unfit. To-day is the golden opportunity, to-morrow will be the silver season, next day but the brazen one, and so on, till at last I shall come to the toes of clay, and be turned to dust. Grant, therefore, that to-day I may hear Thy voice. And if this day be obscure in the calendar, and remarkable in itself for nothing else, give me to make it memorable in my soul, hereupon, by Thy assistance, beginning the reformation of my life.—Fuller.

### A Jewish Parable.

A poor man was travelling on a hot day, carrying a heavy load upon his back. A rich man, passing by in his chariot, took pity on him, and invited him to take a seat in his chariot behind. Shortly after, on turning round, the rich man saw the pilgrim still oppressed with the load upon his back, and asked why he did not lay it on the chariot. The poor man said that it was enough that he had been allowed to be himself carried in the chariot, and he could not presume to ask for more. "O foolish man!" was the reply, "if I am willing and able to carry you, am I not able also to carry your burden?"

Oppressed and anxious Christian, do you not see in this man your own unbelief and folly? He who has accepted your person, and is your reconciled Father in Christ, Jesus, expects you to cast upon Him all your burden of cares too; and He is able to sustain it.